FLUSHING FACTS

DO NOT FLUSH…

- coffee grounds
- dental floss
- disposable diapers
- kitty litter
- sanitary napkins
- tampons
- cigarette butts
- condoms
- gauze bandages
- fat, grease or oil
- paper towels

NEVER FLUSH CHEMICALS Such As:

- paints
- varnishes
- thinners
- waste oils
- photographic solutions
- pesticides

These items can destroy the biological processes taking place in your sewage treatment system.

WARNING SIGNS

Watch for the following indications of potential problems with your aerobic treatment unit:

- Alarms or lights going off
- Changes in your system's normal operating sound
- Changes in the normal color of sewage in the aeration chamber (a grayish brown color, rather than chocolate brown, could indicate a problem)
- Excess solids, foam or scum in the unit
- Plumbing backups
- Sewage odors in the house or yard

What is an aerobic treatment unit?

A home aerobic treatment unit (ATU) is a pre-engineered wastewater treatment machine that collects and treats household sewage. It also is referred to as a mechanical treatment plant. With proper design, operation and maintenance, ATUs can provide a high level of sewage treatment. They come in many shapes and sizes and are extremely important in protecting human health and the environment.

Why would an Aerobic Treatment Unit be recommended for my house?

There are many reasons for utilizing an ATU for sewage treatment. All the factors below have a part in determining the appropriate sewage treatment method:

- Quality of the underlying soil
- Location of the water table
- Amount of land available
- Condition of surrounding waterways

How do aerobic treatment units work?

Aerobic treatment systems treat wastewater in three stages.

1. **Pretreatment:** The first stage reduces the amount of solids (oils, grease, toilet paper, etc.) going into the ATU. Septic tanks, primary settling compartments or a trash trap are pretreatment tanks. This is optional, but may improve ATU performance.
2. **Aeration:** The second stage forces oxygen to mix with the wastewater in the aeration chamber. This allows the beneficial bacteria to thrive and break down the sewage. Without a pretreatment chamber, the solids would settle out as sludge. Figure 1 is a typical schematic of an ATU without a pretreatment tank.
3. **Final Treatment:** The final step includes Disinfection and effluent reduction. These processes are discussed below.

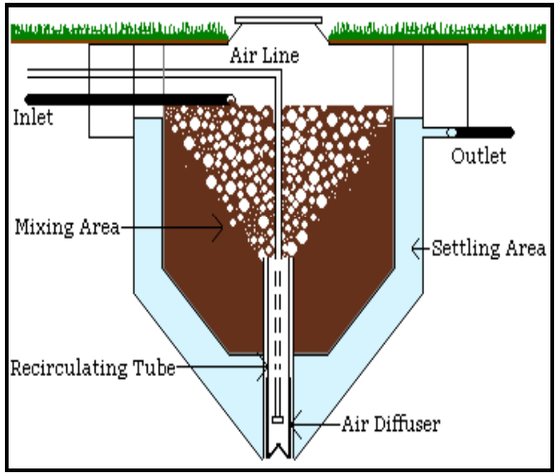

Figure 1 – Typical Home Aerobic Treatment Unit

Disinfection destroys disease-causing microorganisms in the sewage. Depending on where the wastewater ultimately flows, disinfection may be required before discharging. A popular disinfection method is chlorination, which deactivates the disease-causing microorganisms. Disinfection protects public health and is highly recommended.

Effluent Reduction is required to minimize the amount of treated wastewater being discharged. It is designed to maximize the use of the absorptive capacity of the soil, even in poor soil conditions. There are many options for effluent reduction described in detail in Louisiana's *Sanitary Code*. Effluent reduction fields, rock plant filters, spray irrigation, overland flow systems and mound systems are allowed under the *Louisiana State Sanitary Code.*

Other import features of the ATU are the controls and alarms. Some ATUs have controls that allow the homeowner to switch off power in case of an emergency. Alarms are required to alert the homeowner of malfunctions. Depending on the ATU's design, the controls can be located inside or outside the home and alarms can be visible, audible or both.

Why do I need to maintain my aerobic treatment unit?

Maintenance is key to the life and performance of ATUs. Poor maintenance practices can destroy an ATU, forcing expensive repairs or replacements at the homeowner's expense. With proper care of any on-site sewage system, you can expect a long life and good performance.

Keep in mind that you could be putting your family's health at risk if you are discharging improperly treated wastewater into your yard or ditch. Sewage contains harmful bacteria, viruses and parasites that can cause many illnesses.

How do I properly maintain my aerobic treatment unit?

One of the main design criteria of ATUs is the level of aeration provided for sewage treatment. Therefore, maintaining the blower is essential to the treatment process.

Another important issue is the sludge that builds up over time. Therefore, the ATU should be pumped periodically to remove solids that settle to the bottom. The amount of organic matter entering the ATU will determine the pump schedule. A general rule of thumb is to pump it every three to five years.

With the purchase of any ATU, two years of service visits are included in the purchase agreement, so make sure those visits occur. You then will have an option to renew the service agreement and continue the regular visits.

If you have any questions, comments or complaints, please contact us:

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